MARYLAND VEGETABLE GROWERS' ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

January -February, 1945, Vol. XXII, No. 1-2
(missing issues)

NEWSLETTER

Issued by

The Maryland Vegetable Growers' Association

W. R. Ballard
Secretary-Treasurer

Vol. XXII, No. 3 College Park, Maryland March 1945

Firman Bear Addresses Meeting - Firman E. Bear, Head of the Soils Department, New Jersey Experiment Station, presented before the joint session of the Association and the Horticultural Council a discussion of the use of liquid fertilizers in the economy of the future.

Under control conditions, the plant physiologist with pure quartz sand as a base can add in solution all the necessary chemicals, and can produce bigger crops than the best farmer can grow in the open field. The practical problem is how to apply liquid fertilizer on a field scale. In experimental work, four times as much Ladino clover was produced on Lakewood sand by dividing the fertilizer into ten lots and applying one portion every two weeks as could be produced by working all the fertilizer into the top 3-1/2 inches of the soil at the start of the test, or by putting it all in bands 2-1/2 inches deep and 7 inches apart. The fertilizer was a standard 5-10-10 mixture and applied at the rate of 1,000 pounds per acre. Each time one of the ten small portions was applied, enough water was sprinkled on the soil to dissolve the fertilizer and carry it down an inch or so into the soil, all the other plots being given the same amount of water at these periods.

A summary of fertilizer work on fertilizer placement indicates that several principles apply when fertilizers are used in liberal amounts.

1. On loam soils, having a high retentive capacity for fertilizer elements, all fertilizer can be applied to good effect in advance of planting, if a little is placed along the row and the remainder is located more deeply in the soil.

(a) In wet seasons or when irrigation is practiced, shallow placement is effective.

(b) In dry seasons or in the absence of irrigation, deep placement gives best results.

2. On sandy soils, having a low retentive capacity for fertilizers, better results follow repeated small application, especially if applied in liquid form or if irrigation is employed.

The sandier the soil and the less organic matter it contains, the more necessary it is that everything the plant needs be contained in the fertilizer. Thus not only nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium, but calcium, magnesium, sulfur, boron, manganese, zinc, copper, iron, and possibly molybdenum as well, may have to be supplied by the fertilizer.

The commercial application of liquid fertilizer on a large scale is being used in growing roses and carnations in the greenhouse. The beds are flooded with fertilizer carrying water every 8 hours. About 1/2 hour is required for draining off the excess, so the plants feed on the nutrients during about 22 of the 24 hours of each day.

Under field conditions on sandy soils, fertilizers should be fed into the irrigation stream each time applied. For sandy soils not irrigated, fairly deep placement of fertilizer is needed. Best results came from mixing 1/4 of the fertilizer with the surface soil, the remainder placed in bands 7 inches deep and 14 inches apart on the furrow bottom during plowing.

Avoid Congestion in Delivering Tomatoes - Some time ago Clayton P. Maxwell, now manager at Trenton, for Stokely-Van Camp of Canada Limited, developed a system of scheduling deliveries of tomatoes at the firm's factory at Essex. The plan has worked satisfactorily. The handling of this work requires the full time of one man who should have a private telephone line at his disposal. The scheduling office and the grading platform are side by side so that he can keep tab on supplies. Each grower is given a number and he makes arrangements with the scheduler for deliveries. A grower can make appointments by phone or for later loads when he brings one in. All growers whether large or small are given the same consideration. In case of emergencies, growers can make arrangements to bring in loads before or after regular hours, but cannot upset a schedule once it is established. If a grower fails to keep his appointment, he must wait until he can fit into the schedule. In case of bumper yields, growers may be rationed. The schedule is made up 24 hours ahead, has saved the time of the grower, and made for orderly handling of the crop.

J. Donald Baxter, Baxter Canning Co. Limited, Bloomfield, Ontario, tried out the Clayton Maxwell system in 1944, and he said that it really did work and the farmers were enthusiastic about it for another year. He says that he was able to handle 70 to 90 loads per day without congestion and seldom were there over three loads waiting around the plant. Receipts on the biggest days were 10,000 bushels.

Further details of the scheduling plan can be found in the March 12 issue of "The Canning Trade."

Sage Crop Promising for Maryland - Experiments conducted at the University of Maryland for the last four years indicate that sage production in Maryland appears "promising for quite a few years." Soils and climate of the State are favorable for this crop and a market exists in Baltimore for the product. Dr. Walls, who has been in charge of the work, states that the dried stems with leaves attached may be sold.

Average returns from the quarter-acre plot have been at the rate of more than $500 per acre, 10,000 plants per acre are required, and a limited supply is available at the University at a nominal cost. Detailed information on the growing of the crop can be supplied.

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N E W S L E T T E R

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Issued by

The Maryland Vegetable Growers' Association

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E. P. Walls

Secretary-Treasurer

Vol. XXII, No. 5. College Park, Maryland May, 1945

The Role of Water in Plants

While the percentage of water in plant tissues will vary with different kinds of plants, generally speaking, it may be said that water constitutes about 90% of plants. It may require several hundred pounds of water to be taken up by the roots, with the resultant loss by transpiration through the leaves, to make one pound of plant tissue. Plant nutrients, supplied from the soil through the roots, are taken up in solution in the soil water. Water thus becomes the vehicle by which nutrients enter the plant, as well as forming the principal component of the plant body.

Investigators tell us that for normal growth of vegetable crops, we should have one inch of rainfall every week, or ten days, during the growing season. This means about 27,000 gallons per acre and if this is converted to pounds we find it totals 113 tons. In many areas, the annual rainfall is sufficient to supply this quantity of water, but it is not evenly distributed, and even in humid regions, such as Maryland, there seems to be an increasing number of periods of long or short duration, of dry weather at critical times in the development of a crop. There is nothing new in the above statements. These facts have been known for years. They are presented here as a reminder that water is often the limiting factor in crop production and to perhaps give us a better realization of its value.

What can be done to insure the necessary crop supply when it is most needed? By taking advantage of every opportunity to increase the organic matter in the soil, its water-holding capacity may be materially increased. Stable manure, barnyard manure, crop residues turned under, cover crops and catch crops all help to build up this organic supply. Nearly every farm rotation could have crowded into it somewhere more crops to be turned under than is being practiced. Careful thought and planning toward this end will bring out many opportunities for adding organic mattter to the soil. And when this is done, the results will be surprising.

Weeds are undesirable citizens in any field. Weeds have been defined as plants out of place. Another definition noted recently is that "weeds may be roughly defined as plants that grow where they are not wanted". They are crop competitors for water, nutrients and light. Thus, the importance of weed eradication by proper cultivation becomes obvious.

Some experimental work in several states has shown that the principal benefit from cultivation is getting rid of weed competition. But in doing this, let us be careful not to harm the crop we are growing by cutting off roots. Many vegetable crops develop a very elaborate root system which almost completely fills the upper soil levels nearly to the surface, as the crop grows older. No one has ever

improved the growing conditions of a field crop by cutting off the roots. Weed seedlings are very easily destroyed when only an inch or so high. If the seed bed has been properly prepared before planting, shallow and timely cultivation through the crop life is all that is necessary. In addition to weed control, proper cultivation at the right time, on some soils, has the effect of conserving soil moisture and preventing run-off during a rain.

These practices of adding organic matter and making proper and timely cultivation are followed by many Maryland growers. Even then, there are dry periods at times when the crop needs a great deal of water, and the supply is not adequate. This brings up the subject of irrigation. Experiments have shown decided increases in yield of many vegetable crops under irrigation. As far back as 1921 experimental work in Michigan gave the following increases in yield with several crops, viz: cabbage 81%, onions, 233%, beets 86%, carrots, 66%, lettuce 60%. The quality in most crops is also improved, more intensive cropping is possible, and maturity is hastened. If the increase in yield and quality offsets the cost of installation of equipment and its operation, then it is desirable. Certainly it is worth thinking about.

Help Each Other Department

Many of the best vegetable producers in Maryland are members of the Vegetable Growers' Association. They make outstanding yields of crops. Just what they did to obtain such success would make mighty interesting reading to other members. The next time you feel pretty good about the way some crop has come through, won't you just jot down the facts briefly and send them in to the secretary, who will see that they will get into the News-Letter with or without your name, as you prefer. We can make this the most important part of the publication. This is not a contest. No prizes. Just a good feeling of helpfulness by increasing and multiplying the benefit of your achievement.

How about doing your neighbor the favor of getting him to join the Association? If he will send his name and $1.00 annual dues, he will receive a membership card by return mail. Thank you.

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N E W S-L E T T E R

Issued by

The Maryland Vegetable Growers' Association

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E. P. Walls
Secretary-Treasurer

Vol. XXII, No. 7 College Park, Maryland July, 1945

NEW POTATO VARIETY

In the May issue of the Extension Service News, published by the University of Maryland Agricultural Extension Service, announcement is made of a new early potato variety, which is said to give greater yields than other varieties commonly grown in Maryland and makes it possible for farmers to grow two crops per year, without using stored seed of the previous year for planting the late crop. Seed potatoes for the late crop can be used from the produce of the early crop, which when harvested is chemically treated to break the dormancy, and planted immediately.

The new variety, which has not been named, is described as a smooth, round potato, having shallow purple eyes and rich, cream-colored flesh. It is the result of research by Dr. F. J. Stevenson, Senior Geneticist of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, with whom Dr. R. A. Jehle, State Plant Pathologist, has been cooperating and making tests of the new variety. While seed is not yet available to growers, it is reported that considerable acreage is being grown this year to increase seed stock, so that a reasonable quantity of seed is expected to be available next year. Vegetable growers and farmers would do well to try this out, possibly on a home consumption basis at first, in order to determine the possibilities for commercial production later.

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VEGETABLE SEED PRODUCTION IN 1945

The July issue of the Market Growers Journal states that it is expected that the production of vegetable seed for 1945 will be the lowest in four years but still much above average. The report is from the Bureau of Agricultural Economics at Washington and is based on returns from 130 firms which usually produce 95 per cent of the total commercial production. The large seeds, such as peas, beans and corn, are anticipated to be about 257 million pounds and small seeds about 29 million pounds, which would make large seed production 1 per cent under 1944 and the small seed 18 per cent under last year, but these predicted yields are 10 per cent for large seeds and 77 per cent for small seeds, greater than the five-year average from 1939-1943.

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HOW DO YOUR TOMATOES LOOK?

Due to the recent abundant rainfall over the past several weeks, tomato roots have formed near the surface of the ground. Since weather generally "evens itself up" there is a possibility that the recent excessively wet spell may be followed by a dry period. This will likely cause the leaves to curl. Certainly

most tomato crops have been "laid by" and will not receive further cultivation. But with late crops which are not too large to cultivate again, such cultivation should be very shallow, so as not to cut off these roots that have formed near the surface, as this would have the effect of further reducing the water supply.

Blossom end rot of tomatoes may be expected to be bad if the following weeks should be dry. This is a physiological disease likely to be at its worst when a dry period follows a very wet one, and is due to extreme fluctuations in the water supply of the plant. Of course, shallow cultivation will also tend to reduce losses from this disease but aside from that there is not much that can be done about it in the current crop. Irrigation during the time when more moisture is needed is very helpful, because by this means excessive fluctuations in the water supply are prevented. But there are some long-range practices that can be followed that will reduce it. Among these may be mentioned building up the water-holding capacity of the soil through liberal additions of organic matter; conserving moisture by skillful soil management before planting and by proper cultivation during the growing season; by avoiding root injury at all times by shallow working.

If mosaic shows up in tomato fields after the fruit is set, growers need not be alarmed, as these later infections seem to have little reducing effect on yields.

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ANOTHER EFFECT OF WET WEATHER

With the large amount of rainfall that has taken place a great deal of the nitrogen and potash in commercial fertilizers applied to crops has been washed away or leached out of the surface soil layers. Root systems of most crops are not as extensive as normal for the reasons mentioned above, and these important fertilizing elements which are now applied to the soil in readily available form, are likely to be lacking in the soil areas where the roots are feeding. Consequently side dressings with fertilizers bearing these two elements, for late maturing crops where vegetative growth is important, become more necessary and will show greater response in crop yields than in an average season.

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COUNCIL OF FOOD PRODUCERS' ORGANIZATIONS

A news-worthy item that should be of interest to vegetable growers is that about two dozen farm organizations in the Northeastern states, representing fruit and vegetable growers, dairymen and poultrymen, have organized a Council of Food Producers' Organizations. The president of this group is Mr. Philip C. Turner of Maryland, who will be assisted by Mr. C. E. Wise, Jr., with headquarters in Baltimore. Both of these gentlemen are well known to farmers throughout Maryland for their constructive work in farm organizations. It is stated that the general purpose of the Council is to maintain free production and movement of food; to insure the right of free markets for food; to secure unobstructed production, transportation and distribution of food; and to foster proper farmer-labor relations.

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MARYLAND VEGETABLE GROWERS' ASSOCIATION

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August-September, 1945, Vol. XXII, No. 8-9
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N E W S L E T T E R

Issued by
The Maryland Vegetable Growers' Association

E. P. Walls
Secretary-Treasurer

Vol. XXII, No. 10 College Park, Maryland October, 1945

SWEET POTATO TIME

History tells us that the sweet potato was observed by Columbus as an important food plant of the western world. It is now the second most important vegetable in acreage and dollar value, being exceeded only by the Irish potato. Its importance as a commercial food crop in Maryland has been increasing steadily and interest in problems of production and storage is very keen among Maryland producers. The University of Maryland Agricultural Experiment Station has already made a major contribution to the industry by the development of the Maryland Golden variety which has largely replaced all others for commercial production in this state.

In recent years the Horticultural Department has conducted considerable work along production and storage lines, as well as extensive work in dehydration and canning procedures. Many problems which have arisen are of such nature that they do not lend themselves to quick solution, but require several years under varying climatic conditions. Neither are they all purely Horticultural and for this reason several departments of the University are cooperating as the need arises for investigation in several fields.

The following are some lines of investigation which are underway, the complete results of which will be of interest to those engaged in the industry and are presented here to give some idea of the scope of the work in progress:

STORAGE

The Departments of Horticulture and Agricultural Engineering have conducted storage experiments for several years and Mr. George J. Burkhardt has designed and built several storage houses where curing and storage conditions have been carefully checked. These experiments have demonstrated the importance of maintaining high humidity and a temperature around 80° F. during the curing period. This brings up the question of storage house design and heating apparatus in order to achieve and maintain these conditions uniformly throughout the interior of the building. Stoves have been found unsatisfactory as they permit temperature differences of 30° F. between floor and ceiling. The heating apparatus, in order to be effective, must be located under a slatted false floor and may be of the hot water, steam or electric type.

Some other problems that have arisen in the effort to maintain suitable conditions of temperature and humidity are:

1. Sufficient insulation of walls and ceiling to avoid dripping.

2. Effective vapor seal for the protection of the insulation from the inside of the house.

3. Choice of building materials for inside of house.

4. Proper ventilation.

5. After effect of different conditions and length of time under which potatoes are held between digging and beginning of storage.

6. Size of house as governing maintenance of desirable conditions.

It may be seen from the few problems listed above that the solution of any one of them may lead into numerous ramifications. Someone has said that in experimental work "the solution of any problem presents a number of others." This seems particularly true of sweet potato storage.

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CRACKING IN THE FIELD

A perennial question in the minds of growers and handlers of sweet potatoes is "why do sweet potatoes crack?" This has usually been attributed to "second growth" and is particularly prevalent in seasons where a dry period is followed by abundant moisture. However, with other crops a similar condition has been attributed to boron deficiency. This caused Dr. L. E. Scott to wonder whether boron deficiency might influence the amount of cracking in sweet potatoes. Previous studies with other crops have shown that boron nutrition is closely associated with potassium and calcium up-take. It is well known that the sweet potato is a heavy user of potassium.

In order to throw some light on the responsibility of boron in cracking, Dr. Scott is conducting experiments in the greenhouse and in the field, in which there are 27 combinations of these three elements. The matter becomes more complex, when we take into account the assumed association between potassium intake and the deposit of food materials in the roots and the effect that potassium may have on the keeping qualities of the sweet potatoes in storage. The results of these experiments when conducted long enough to include varying climatic conditions will be of interest to everyone connected with the sweet potato industry.

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FOOD VALUE OF SWEET POTATOES

Cooperative work between the Horticulture Department and the Department of Home Economics at the University of Maryland has brought out some interesting facts as to the importance of this vegetable in the diet from the standpoint of nutrition. Analyses of sweet potatoes and sweet potato products show them to be particularly high in certain nutritive and vitamin elements. Of course the carbohydrate value is particularly high and in a very palatable form. The sweet potato is a very versatile table vegetable because it can be prepared in so many different ways and combinations.

The pro-vitamin A (carotene) content is among the highest of vegetables studied. This is particularly true of the Maryland Golden variety, developed at this Experiment Station. It is no mean carrier of vitamin C (ascorbic acid), ranking as high as many other vegetables. In the mineral elements, particularly calcium and iron, it compares well with other non-leafy vegetables and proteins are about as high as in other vegetables except those where the seed is the part used for food.

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MARYLAND VEGETABLE GROWERS' ASSOCIATION

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The Maryland Vegetable Growers' Association

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E. P. Walls
Secretary-Treasurer

Vol. XXII, No. 12 College Park, Maryland December, 1945

THE ANNUAL MEETING

The twenty-seventh annual meeting of the Maryland Vegetable Growers' Association will be held at the Lord Baltimore Hotel in Baltimore, beginning at 10:00 A.M. on January 9, 1946. The afternoon session will be given over to the Horticultural Council as in previous years. Those responsible for both the morning and afternoon programs are endeavoring to arrange topics that will be of the greatest interest to every vegetable grower in Maryland, and to obtain speakers for each subject who, because of their work in that particular field, have come to be recognized as authorities in their respective lines.

While "tops" in programs is the objective, probably the best part of any meeting of this kind is when it is turned into an "experience meeting" and the members participate in a free-for-all discussion of their problems.

All of these efforts of program builders are dwarfed or magnified in direct proportion to the number of people in attendance. If something is going to be discussed which an individual should know about, in self-justification he should be there to hear it. If he has something to contribute that will help others do a better job in 1946, he certainly will be anxious to pass it along. Each one of us falls into one or the other of these groups. In other words, you should be there. And bring along a neighbor who is not a member and let us make this meeting so interesting that he will want to join.

A good New Year's resolution to make right now is that each of us is going to do his utmost to build up a good, strong, substantial membership in 1946. United effort toward successful accomplishment promises to be more imperative in the future even than in the past. Thank you for having read this far. Will see you at the meetings.

(Please turn the page)

THE VEGETABLE SHOW

Enclosed find premium list for the sixteenth annual exhibition. This year, as last, the show is confined to potatoes, because January is not timely for exhibiting most of our other vegetable crops. If you have already received a copy of this premium list, please note that it now has three pages, the last one giving additional prizes for sweet potatoes. Here is a challenge to Maryland Golden Sweet Potato growers of Commercial Table Stock to show the world what they can do.

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SUGGESTIONS TO EXHIBITORS

The exact number or quantity called for in the premium list must be shown in order to qualify for a prize.

Be sure not to mix varieties in any one exhibit.

Uniformity of size, shape, and color are very important.

Do not select the largest or smallest specimens but try to show the average size for the variety.

Examine each specimen carefully and be sure it is free from disease and from defects caused by insect damage or mechanical injury.

It is preferred that potatoes for exhibition not be washed. Standard show practice is to brush off dirt or dust or to wipe them off with a cloth.

If you are not an exhibitor, do not look over the show and make the comment,"I have better potatoes than those at home." It would have helped the exhibit if you had sent an entry to the show and let the judges decide.

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